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PROBLEMS ARE
OPPORTUNITIES
IN
DISGUISE

PMA I II MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT bulletin

No. 9

★ MAR 23 1954 ★

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PMA CENTRAL EMPLOYEE AWARDS COMMITTEE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

May 16, 1950

WASHINGTON EMPLOYEE GETS BIG AWARD!

On April 7, surrounded by co-workers of the Office of Administrative Services, Louis Baker received from G. E. Tichenor, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Management, a cash award of \$435 and a Certificate of Appreciation signed by Administrator Ralph S. Trigg.

The award was made for Baker's management improvement proposal to consolidate the wire services in PMA. At the time the proposal was made, PMA was maintaining two leased wire systems. The Office of Administrative Services operated the Market News Leased Wire Teletype network and Transportation and Warehousing Branch (Shipping and Storage at the time) operated a teletype system for handling messages dealing with CCC activities and other matters. Both systems reached the same cities in a number of instances. Confusion resulted from the receipt of messages in one office intended for the other. Like difficulties resulted from the splitting of messages--that is different parts of the same message going to each office. Telephone inquiries about messages caused loss of time in identifying the system the message involved. There was considerable duplication.

The suggestion called for the centralization of the two systems under one operating head--the delivery of all telegrams and messages, both in Washington and in the field, at one office--that the single point system be discontinued and that all circuits be consolidated--and that employees of both groups be trained where needed in order that the personnel might be equipped and available for work in either type of activity.

The proposal was adopted and put into operation September 1949. The savings so far resulting from the plan are



G. E. Tichenor on left presenting award to Louis Baker.

\$15,327 for manpower and \$26,705 for equipment, a total of more than \$42,000. The service is better and more efficient, permits flexibility in the movement of traffic, more rapid transmissions and more effective use of operators' time.

G. R. McPherson, Chief of Administrative Services, opened the presentation ceremony by saying that his entire office is behind the Awards Program. It improves operations by stimulating ideas for increasing efficiency and economy--and gives due recognition to the employees who merit such recognition.

Upon presenting the award, Mr. Tichenor reviewed the history of the proposal and commended Baker for his persistence in urging the plan and for his leadership and technical ability which achieved a successful consolidation.

CASH AWARDS

The following suggesters save the Government more than \$43,000 a year with their ideas. If any of the plans can be adapted to your work, please notify the PMA Central Employee Awards Committee, Washington, D.C. Let's give the suggester full credit and consideration for his idea! Write the Central Committee for additional information on any suggestion.



PRINTS CONSTANT ITEMS

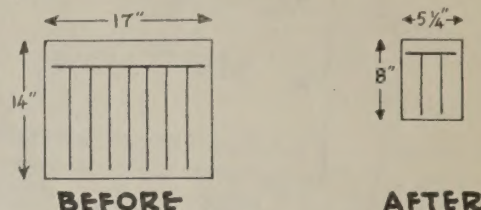
JAMES P. ARMSTRONG, FISCAL BRANCH, WASHINGTON - \$15. Suggested the use of mimeographed worksheet forms in reconciling Disbursing Officers' Cash Accounts. The former worksheet used was ordinary 7 columnar accounting paper which required the penciling in by hand of all items, titles and headings. All items that remain constant from month to month are included in the mimeographed worksheet. The new worksheet eliminates the preparation by hand of 1,248 worksheets during the year saving 192 man hours of work. The new worksheets are letter size which facilitates filing and enhances the appearance of the permanent records.

VIRGIE P. MOSELEY, FISCAL BRANCH (now with BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS), WASHINGTON - \$10. Proposed the printing of constant items formerly typed each time on the reverse side of Form PMA-254, "Loans Made by CCC". Although the savings in money is small, there is intangible value in the saving of typist time in the preparation of headings on the reverse side of the form during periods when the section is striving to meet rigid time schedules and in the rapid completion of the work facilitating the final preparation and issuance of CCC monthly financial statements.

ELIMINATES DUPLICATION

LOUIS BAKER, OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, WASHINGTON - \$435. For his plan to consolidate the leased wire services in PMA. (See article on first page.)

REVISES FORM



WILLIAM G. MEANS, FISCAL BRANCH, WASHINGTON - \$40. Proposed a revision of the pencil Block Control Record Form used for controlling accounting documents sent to the Machine Operations Section for punching IBM cards and for machine tabulation. The previous form was on 14 columnar accounting paper size 14" x 17". The new form is only 8" x 5-1/4" and eliminated unnecessary data. The new form saves 520 man hours of work and 2,084 sheets of 14" x 17" columnar paper a year and results in neater and more compact records and files.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE

ROBERT BIER, FRUIT AND VEGETABLE BRANCH, WASHINGTON, received a within-grade step increase for the following accomplishment: "Outstanding administrative ability and unusually effective leadership in the handling of program operations; superb management of employees under emergency conditions; constructive contributions to the standardization and inspection service in the orderly marketing of peanuts which resulted in substantial benefits to the industry and to the Government.

WHAT'S OUTSTANDING?

The 1949 Classification Act directs each agency to make systematic reviews to identify employees, supervisors and units outstanding in efficiency and economy of operation. It's purpose is to give the recognition merited.

As an initial plan, officials, efficiency rating committees and employee award committees are attempting to single out employees who not only meet the requirements for the highest attainable efficiency rating, but stand out among those who are given such rat-

ing, and merit recognition for their outstanding efficiency and accomplishments.

This is only a trial plan among several others being studied for use in carrying out the intent of Congress. No specific plan for use on a continuing basis has yet been adopted. It may be determined to use more than one method. The field is wide open and The Central Committee welcomes constructive comments and ideas on this matter. If you know of a good sound way of identifying outstanding employees, supervisors and units, let us know. If you can develop any standards or criteria for application to determine what is outstanding in efficiency and economy we would like to have that too.

RULES and REGS

So you have an idea and didn't send it in. Just because you thought it might be considered part of your job--and you wouldn't be eligible for an award. PMA is losing the benefit of many good ideas for just that reason.

PMA Instruction 101.4 states that no employee will be eligible for a cash award if the suggestion represents a part of the normal requirements of his job. You are eligible if it can be determined that the suggestion is not part of the normal requirements. It's difficult to do in many cases--but regardless, let PMA in on the idea. If there is any question on eligibility, the PMA Central Awards Committee will figure it out.

Employees are eligible for superior accomplishment step increase or efficiency award (cash or up to 3 steps in the grade) even if the suggestion is part of the job requirements.

GIVE ALL THE FACTS...

You people in PMA are participating more and more in management. We know this from the number of suggestions for improvement being turned in--from all branches--and from every part of the country.

Many suggestions being received by the Central committee cannot be appraised because of incomplete data. Delays are being encountered in attempting to

get all the necessary facts.

In order to adequately appraise your proposals and process them without delay, you should supply complete information. Check these 6 points to see if you have covered the essential data in your write up:

1. Describe the "old" method fully--step by step if possible.
2. Indicate the problems and disadvantages of the "old" method.
3. Show cost of "old" method. Such as the number of the forms handled per day or week (volume)--how long it takes to handle one form, or how many are handled in an hour--(time)--the cost of the paper, supplies, etc., used (materials) and any other factors making up the cost of the method.
4. Describe the proposed method fully--step by step if possible.
5. Indicate the advantages, benefits, and estimated savings which will result. Cost of new method should be shown as mentioned in 3 above. Be sure the computations and method used in arriving at estimated savings is clearly shown.
6. Supply any additional information, charts, sketches and exhibits needed.

Careful preparation will make your proposal more workable, lessen the job of investigation, and greatly increase the chance of acceptance. Don't hesitate to talk it over with your supervisor--he will be glad to help you.

SUPERVISOR'S HONOR ROLL

The submission of a suggestion that earns an award from any group signifies that the supervisor of that group is displaying the kind of leadership that promotes constructive thinking. The following are supervisors whose employees' recent awards are covered in this issue.



Ronald E. Herren, Fiscal Branch, Washington (for William G. Means)
Lillian C. Waldecker, Fiscal Branch Washington (for James P. Armstrong)
Clinton M. Hisle, Fiscal Branch, Washington (for Virgie P. Moseley)
George R. McPherson, Office of Administrative Services, Washington (for Louis Baker)

Hot Stove League

WASTE OF MONEY?

An employee in the Midwest Area says that the envelopes with suggestion blanks enclosed which were passed out to all employees is a "waste of Government money". Note: Based on the response being received, the suggestion blanks encouraged many employees to turn in ideas that PMA would not have otherwise received. It is expected that a number of them will be beneficial. One already adopted will save PMA each year many times the cost of the paper distributed.

THE BIG BAD WOLF!

A girl in Washington tells us that she has several suggestions but hasn't submitted them. She says that her supervisor is not anxious to get ideas for improvement. She doesn't want to get on the wrong side of the boss.

Note: Some supervisors think it's a discredit to their competence when employees think of better ways to do things. They believe their superiors might wonder why the supervisor didn't think of it first himself--or why he was doing it that old way all along. We think it's a credit to the supervisor's competence and leadership if he can encourage his employees to use their initiative in sug-

gesting improvements. The supervisor bears the final responsibility. He gets the credit for operating an efficient unit.--Let's hear from both sides of this question--from both supervisory and non-supervisory employees. What's been Your experience? What do YOU think?

IN INDUSTRY

Did you see the Ford Motor Company double page add about their suggestion system in the March 20 issue of "Life"?--General Motors Corporation reports that employees have received \$5,000,000 in awards since 1942 when their suggestion program began.

Send communications to PMA Central Employee Awards Committee, USDA, Washington 25, D. C. Names of contributors to this column will be published or withheld as requested.

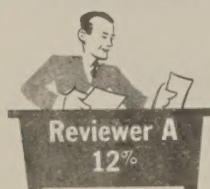
CLARIFICATION

Adopted suggestion described in Bulletin No. 8 on formula for determining an employee's fiscal liability for personal use of Government car refers only to fiscal liability. Disciplinary penalties as severe as removal from the service in addition remains unchanged.

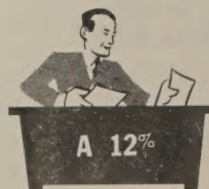
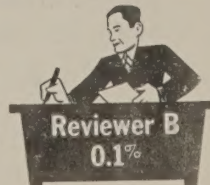
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

IS THERE ANY MISDIRECTED EFFORT?

IS TOO MUCH TIME BEING SPENT ON RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT ACTIVITIES OR UNNECESSARY WORK?



BEFORE



AFTER



In this example, it was thought necessary--as a safety device to keep a double check for accuracy on the review of cases. Necessary, that is, until it was discovered that Reviewer A found a percentage of errors of 12%, while Reviewer B, spending the same amount of time, turned up only an additional 0.1% of errors. With these facts it was decided that double control did not pay. The boss took a calculated risk and freed Reviewer B for more worthwhile work.